



## **Returning Home After a Disaster: Be Healthy and Safe**

### **Information for the Public**

#### **What can I do to protect myself from getting sick or hurt?**

- Clean your home as recommended to stop mold.
- Never mix bleach and ammonia, because the fumes could kill you.
- Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning by placing generators, pressure washers, charcoal grills, camp stoves, or other fuel-burning devices outside and away from open doors, windows, and air vents.
- Eat and drink only food and water you know are safe.
- Drive safely, wear your seatbelt, and don't drink and drive.
- Do not enter a building if you smell gas. Call 911. Do not light a match or turn on lights.
- Wear waterproof boots and gloves to avoid floodwater touching your skin.
- Wash your hands often with soap and clean water, or use a hand-cleaning gel with alcohol in it.

#### **What steps can I take to clean and stop mold in my home?**

- Take out items that have soaked up water and that cannot be cleaned and dried.
- Fix water leaks.
- Use fans and dehumidifiers and open doors and windows to remove moisture.
- To remove mold, mix 1 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water, wash the item with the bleach mixture, scrub rough surfaces with a stiff brush, rinse the item with clean water, then dry it or leave it to dry.
- Check and clean heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning systems before use.
- To clean hard surfaces that do not soak up water and that may have been in contact with floodwater, first wash with soap and clean water. Next disinfect with a mixture of 1 cup of bleach in 5 gallons of water. Then allow to air dry.
- Wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, and goggles when cleaning with bleach.
- Open windows and doors to get fresh air.
- Never mix bleach and ammonia. The fumes from the mixture could kill you.

#### **How can I protect myself from carbon monoxide poisoning?**

- Do not use generators, pressure washers, charcoal grills, camp stoves, or other fuel-burning devices indoors or in enclosed or partially enclosed areas such as garages, even with doors or windows open.
- Do not put these devices outside near an open door, window, or air vent.

- You could be poisoned or killed by carbon monoxide, an odorless, colorless gas from burning fuel such as gasoline, charcoal, or propane.
- Make sure a battery or electric powered CO detector is functional to alert you to dangerous levels of carbon monoxide in your home.

### **What should I do to keep drinking water and food safe?**

- Listen to public announcements to find out if local tap water is safe for drinking, cooking, cleaning, or bathing.
- Until the water is safe, use bottled water or boil or disinfect water.
- If a "boil water" advisory is in effect, do not drink tap water or use it to brush your teeth unless water has come to a rolling boil for at least 1 minute or is treated with unscented household chlorine bleach.
- To treat water, add 1/4 teaspoon (approximately 1.5 mL) bleach to 1 gallon of cloudy water or 1/8 teaspoon (approximately 0.75 mL) bleach to 1 gallon of clear water. Stir well and let it stand for 30 minutes before you use it.
- Do not eat food that smells bad, looks bad, or has touched floodwater. When in doubt, throw food out.

### **What should I do to prevent electrical injuries?**

- Do not touch fallen electrical wires. They may be live and could hurt or kill you.
- Turn off the electrical power at the main source if there is standing water.
- Do not turn on power or use an electric tool or appliance while standing in water.

### **What safety precautions can I take with animals and insects?**

- Consider avoiding outdoor activities during the evening and early morning, which are peak biting times for many mosquitoes.
- Use an insect repellent with DEET or Picaridin.
- Stay away from wild or stray animals.
- Stray dogs may be hurt or afraid and may bite.
- Call local authorities to handle animals.
- Get rid of dead animals according to local guidelines.

### **What safety precautions can I take while driving?**

- Stop and look both ways at all intersections.
- Drive slowly and keep space between you and other vehicles.
- Watch out for trash on the road.
- Wear your seatbelt.
- Do not drive if you have been drinking.

#### **Reference Returning Home After a Disaster: Be Healthy and Safe**

1. Centers for Disease & Prevention (CDC) - <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/afteraflood/>